

Year 7 - Writing to Analyse, Comment and Review

This set of lessons covers the writing skills of analysis, comment and review and concentrates on the idea of choosing and judging books for private reading.

Lesson 1 requires the pupils to ANALYSE 'blurbs'.

Lesson 2 asks the pupils to COMMENT on the openings and endings of novels.

Lesson 3 requires the pupils to use the strategies already discussed to select a book for their own personal use and then to write a REVIEW.

There are many possible extension activities, in fact the list is probably endless, but here are just one or two suggestions:

- 'Selling' or advertising your favourite book
- A class review magazine
- Book of the week/month/term

There are many more ideas in the Reading for Pleasure file in the English Office.

Lesson 1

Objectives – To analyse the style of ‘blurb’ writing on fiction and non-fiction books.

WHOLE CLASS SENTENCE LEVEL WORK

1. Question and answer session on how we choose a book. What do we look at? (The title, the illustrations, the name of the author, the beginning and the ending, the ‘blurb’.)
2. Class look at OHTs of various blurbs and analyse the devices used by the publishers in both fiction and non-fiction examples.
Fiction – capitals/ suspense/.../comments from critics and newspapers/ questions
Non-Fiction – questions/bullet points/italics/lists
3. Predict what might happen in the examples of fiction ‘blurbs’, what genre the stories might be.
4. Discuss how much information about each book is provided in the ‘blurb’.

WHOLE CLASS WORD LEVEL WORK

1. Discuss grammatical style of ‘blurb’ writing. The use of half-sentences, adjectives and adverbs to interest you in the plot, characters or content.

GROUP WORK

Group A - Working in pairs. Each pair has two ‘blurbs’ : one fiction and one non-fiction. They are to analyse what we have learnt about each of these books by reading these ‘blurbs’.

Groups B,C,D – Working in pairs. As above but each pair has to answer a set of questions about their blurbs.

Group E – Working in pairs. As above but using a worksheet with a checklist to fill in and some sentences to complete.

PLENARY – Report back from one pair in each group. One from each pair to read the ‘blurb’ to the class and the other to read out their analysis. Reinforce the points made earlier about how publishers use language devices to attract readers.

Group A

Write an analysis of the following 'blurb' commenting on the following points:

- What sort of book it is
- What information we are given about the book
- What you think is going to happen/ be included in the book
- What devices the publishers have used to attract readers
- Any particularly effective phrases or words

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Groups B, C & D

Read the following 'blurb' carefully and answer the following questions in as much detail as you can. Do not write the question out but make sure that you answer in full sentences.

1. What sort of book is this going to be?
2. What do we already know about the book?
3. If it is a fiction book, what do you think is going to happen in the story?
If it is a non-fiction book, what sorts of things are going to be included in the book?
4. Pick out three special devices that the publishers have used to make this book sound interesting.
5. Would you choose this book? If so, why? If not, why not and despite your personal preference, do you think that this is a successful blurb?

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If it is a non-fiction book, what sorts of things are going to be included in the book?
4. Pick out three special devices that the publishers have used to make this book sound interesting.
5. Would you choose this book? If so, why? If not, why not and despite your personal preference, do you think that this is a successful blurb?

Group E

Read the following 'blurb' carefully and then do the following tasks in your exercise book.

Section A

Choose words and phrases to complete these sentences:

1. This book is going to be.....
(exciting / an adventure story / a sad story / a happy story / mysterious / spooky / frightening / an interesting story / a story that will keep me on the edge of my seat.)
2. I know that the characters are.....
(young children / a group of friends / a mixture of children and adults / all from the same family)
3. The publisher has used a question in the opening sentence because.....
(he wants you to answer the question / it's a good way to make you want to read on / he gives you the answer in the story / he gives you the answer at the bottom of the page)

Section B

Answer the following questions in your own words:

1. Write out your favourite line from the 'blurb' and explain why you think it is so good.
2. Would you read this book? Give reasons for your answer.

Fiction Review

The title of this book is *The Machine Gunners* and it was written by Robert Westall. I found it in our school library although it only costs £2.95 to buy in the shops and I think it would be money well spent.

This is a very exciting Second World War story. On every page new things happen and you can't put the book down until the end. You can't skip any pages because afterwards you won't understand what has happened.

Chas McGill, a very important character, has the second best collection of war souvenirs in Garmouth until he finds the machine gun in the woods on a crashed German airplane. He always wants to be the best and be the leader of whatever is going on.

Chas and his friends discover Rudi, the pilot of the German plane. I think Rudi is a bit stupid because he puts his hands up to kids who are holding a broken machine gun and then he gives them his gun. Before he is caught he has not eaten for days, but with the children he gets three meals a day and yet he still wants to escape. When he tries to run away he is caught and tied to his bed. If he stayed until the war was over, the children guarantee that he would not be hurt or killed.

I think a very sad part in the story is when Nick's house gets blown up. He is the only one left alive because his father comes to him in a dream saying, 'Get out!'

I really enjoyed this book and would recommend it to anyone aged 11 or over, especially someone who likes action-packed stories.

(Written by an 11 year old pupil)

Non-Fiction Review

The book I chose is called 'Exploring Ancient Greece' and is a non-fiction book. It was written by John Malham and was published in 1996. I found the book on the shelves of my History room and my teacher recommended it.

This book charts the rise and fall of Ancient Greece from its beginnings some 4,000 years ago to its conquest by the Romans in 146 BC.

With double-page spreads divided into chapters, it combines historical events and figures, with cultural achievement and religious beliefs. Fact Files are used to highlight key topics.

While the text is solidly and clearly written the overall treatment is rather predictable with little to capture the imagination either textually or visually. A read of the credits reveals that the book is based on a previous title starring movie character and ace archeologist, Indiana Jones. It misses his presence to give it a much-needed lift.

If you are studying the history of Ancient Greece then you will certainly find this book useful, but it is not what I would call a 'thrill-a-minute' read.

(Written by a 13 year old pupil)

Lesson 2

Objectives

- To analyse the devices used by authors in the opening and closing sections of novels.
- To comment on a selection of novel openings and endings.

WHOLE CLASS SENTENCE LEVEL WORK

1. Discussion and recap on how we choose a book. Discuss the various devices used by authors to attract readers in the first paragraph of a novel.
2. Discuss the devices used to ensure a successful ending to a novel
3. Use OHT of spider diagrams of Beginnings and Endings and add any suggestions from the class.
4. Use OHT of three novel openings. Discuss what 'genre' these stories fall into and how we know that just from the opening section. Reveal each one in turn.

WHOLE CLASS WORD LEVEL WORK

1. Discuss what techniques have been used and the effects they have achieved.
2. Select any phrases and words that are particularly successful in sustaining the interest of the reader and suggesting what might follow in the story.

GROUP WORK

Group A – Using a sheet of ten novel openings and ten novel endings. Match them up together and give reasons for your decisions.

Groups B,C,D – Using a sheet of 5 openings and endings. Match them up and answer questions on each pair.

Group E – Same sheet as Groups BCD to match up. Answer one question on each pair.

PLENARY

- One set of openings and endings from each group. They should give the reasons for their choice.
- Reinforce the features and techniques used in novel openings/endings.

Novel Opening 1

‘Sometimes at night when the rain is beating against the windows of my room, I think about that summer on the farm. It has been five years, but when I close my eyes I am once again by the creek watching the black fox come leaping over the green, green grass. She is as light and free as the wind, exactly as she was the first time I saw her.’

Novel Opening 2

‘Marley was dead: to begin with. There is no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the clergyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner.’

Novel Opening 3

‘In a hole in the ground there lived a hobbit. Not a nasty, dirty, wet hole, filled with the ends of worms and an oozy smell, nor yet a dry, bare, sandy hole with nothing in it to sit down on or to eat: it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort.’

Groups B,C,D

Match up the following novel openings and endings then answer the following questions on each pair.

1. What sort of story do you think this is going to be?
2. How do you know this?
3. What do you think is going to happen?

Group E

Match up the following novel openings and endings.

What do you think happens in each of these stories?

Lesson 3

This lesson assumes that each pupil has chosen and recently read a book either from home, the Library or a School Library Service box.

Objectives

- To write a review of either a fiction or non-fiction book using a writing frame.

WHOLE CLASS SENTENCE LEVEL WORK

1. Brief discussion about books – why we chose them, did they turn out the way we thought they would etc.
2. OHT of a book review (fiction). Read review and point out structure and the way in which both information and opinion is conveyed.
3. OHT of a book review (non-fiction). Read review and discuss as above.

WHOLE CLASS WORD LEVEL WORK

1. OHT of framework for a review. Discuss how it applies to either a fiction or a non-fiction book.
2. Suggest an opening sentence for each paragraph and discuss ways in which to link the paragraphs.
3. Reinforce the need to include information as well as opinion and to back up any opinions with references to the book as evidence and reasons.

GROUP WORK

Groups A,B,C ,D – Using a blank framework, fill in the details for each section according to the book they read individually. Use the framework as a plan and write the review out in full.

Group E – Use the blank framework of sentence starters, fill in the details according to the book they have read. It might be an idea for all the pupils in Group E to read the same book. Group sets of novels can be obtained from Room 37. Use the framework as a plan and write the review out in full.

PLENARY

Ask for volunteers to read out their reviews so far. Ask the class – would they like to read these books now? Reinforce the features of review writing.

Writing a Book Review

Introduction	Give the title of the book, the name of the author + if it is a non-fiction book, say when it was published. Say where you got the book from.
Setting / subject matter	Describe when and where the majority of the story takes place / Explain what the main subject of the book is. Describe the main character(s) / Explain how the book is organised.
Summary of the plot / summary of the information you learned from reading this book	Explain what the story involves but don't give the game away! For a non-fiction book you should describe how well they presented the information and what devices they used to make it interesting e.g. colour or black/white illustrations? Diagrams? Maps? Charts? Photographs? Pull-out pages? Puzzles?
Personal opinion	What did you enjoy most about reading this book? If you had to choose a passage or section, what would it be and why? Would you recommend this book? If so, to whom?
Summary	Summarise in a couple of sentences what sort of book it is and what you feel about it.

Writing a Book Review

Introduction	
Setting / subject matter	
Summary of the plot / summary of the information you learned from reading this book	
Personal opinion	
Summary	

Writing a Book Review

If you're not sure how to plan a review, this outline will help you to write a review of a book you have read.

My book is called
It was written by and was
first published in the year by I obtained the book
from

The story takes place in The main character is
called He / She is a sort of person.

The story involves
.....
.....
.....

The thing I enjoyed most about reading the book was
.....
.....

If I had to choose a passage from the book to read to the class, I would read
the part where
.....
.....

This comes on page I would select it because
.....
.....

In my opinion, the book is.....
.....
I would recommend it to.....
.....